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4136 a.a. 5

T H E
METHODIST INSTRUCTED.

OR THE
Absurdity and Inconsistency of their
Principles demonstrated.

I N A
L E T T E R
TO THE
Brethren at Gravesend.

By PHILAGATHUS CANTABRIGIENSIS.

Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch? Luke vi. 39.

Be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. Ephesians iv. 14.

L O N D O N:

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MDCC LXIV.



T H E

Methodist Instructed.

GENTLEMEN,

IF I am rightly informed, you have taken out a *licence* for your Tabernacle at *Gravesend*, and licensed yourselves as Protestant Dissenters, under the denomination of *Independents*; by which, you have undeniably proved, that you are endowed with the wisdom of the *Serpent*; but, I fear, not with the harmlessness of the *Dove*.

This was most *wisely* done by you, for two very material reasons: for, first, there is a congregation of well-behaved, sensible Presbyterians already in the town, and it would not have answered your private ends so well, if you had not distinguished yourselves by some other name: and, secondly, without a *licence*, you could not have set apart a *place* for divine worship, without having been obnoxious to the penalty of the law, which requires it of you.

But, methinks, you have not so fully proved your dove-like innocence thereby. For, in the first place, you profess yourselves to be *Members of the Established Church*, and yet you needlessly separate yourselves from it.

B

2dly.

2dly. You pretend a great veneration for its doctrine and worship, and, at the same time you pray extempore in your tabernacle; by which you have introduced a different manner of worship, and set aside the *form* you profess to admire.

3dly. You have licensed yourselves under the character of *Independents*, than which, (how politic soever it may be) nothing is more contrary to the government of the church you own yourselves *members* of: for the Independents are a sect of Dissenters who set up for a *Church* of themselves, independent of all other churches; govern themselves by their own laws; and disclaim all foreign power and jurisdiction whatsoever, whether of Bishops, Presbyters, &c. which is no proof of your great zeal for its discipline and doctrine: nor is your claim to the simplicity of the *dove* at all strengthened, but rather rendered more doubtful in the opinions of all intelligent and impartial judges.

4thly. You have set aside Ordination, contrary to the rule and appointment of the church, and admit of lay-preachers; thereby debasing the venerable office of the ministry, and bringing that most respectable character into contempt: which is another very great absurdity and contradiction; for in so doing you declare yourselves to be enemies to the church, instead of friends to it, to its most essential constitution.

5thly.

5thly. If I may presume, I would ask you, What is it you separate yourselves from the church of England for? Your pretence, I know, is, that the clergy don't preach the *Gospel*, don't preach *Christ*; and that they are all, or most of them, mere moralists, which, in your sense of the word, is only a more civil appellation, or name, for Heathens, and you cannot edify by them. Very civil, indeed, O ye Solifidians! and no doubt the clergy will as civilly acknowledge it in their turn. But what do you mean by this cant? for it is nothing else. Do they not preach repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and obedience to his laws, each of them as they see occasion? And what is this but preaching the Gospel? Or do you mean, they don't mention the *Lord Jesus Christ*, by way of *charm*, so often as you do, on purpose to set the multitude a groaning, and conjure up a spirit of *Fanaticism*, when ever you think it necessary, in your assemblies: *this*, 'tis confessed, must be very edifying to most of your people.---None, more faithfully than the clergy, (at least all within the circle of my acquaintance) explain, and recommend the laws of Christ to their hearers: and pray, is not recommending obedience to his laws, preaching Christ? And is not this Christian Morality, which gives you so great offence, much preferable to your extempore, fanatical

tical preachments ? and your sounding from your pulpits the name of Christ, without a rational meaning ? and trumpeting aloud Faith, without Works ?

I would fain know of you, who are the best Subjects to king George, they who call him King, and deny the necessity of obedience to his laws ; or, they who acknowledge him to be their Sovereign, and preach up obedience to them ? And, for the same reason, Is not he the best Divine, the best Christian, who says, we can neither be justified, or saved, without Repentance, and a sincere Obedience to all God's Laws ? I say, is not such a one better than he, who pretends we are justified and saved by Faith alone ? But, *No*, say you, this is more than we plead for : for, though we contend that we are justified by Faith alone, we say likewise, that every sincere believer will bring forth good fruits ; and that he will not otherwise be saved.---*You do so*.---But, good Mr. Methodist, what necessity is there then for good works, if we are justified, *i. e.* if God deems us just without them ? They are nothing but filthy rags, as you often rightly observe, and of no account in the sight of God, if what you profess to believe be true ; and we shall infallibly be saved, whether we bring forth good fruits or not, as your more consistent brethren the Antinomians affirm ; They roundly assert this, and, without mincing the matter, boldly

boldly deny the necessity of good works, either to Justification, or Salvation. But You, to save your credit, artfully plead the necessity of them to Salvation, and yet, at the same time, most stupidly contradict yourselves, by maintaining we are justified by *Faith alone*. By which it is very evident, you do not understand what is the true sense of *Justification*; and must mean, whatever you say to the contrary, that we may be justified, and, if justified, why not pardoned and saved without them; the very same heresy, in effect, as the Antinomians are guilty of: the absurdity and inconsistency of which is so very great, that I cannot entertain so mean an opinion of you, as to think you will attempt to defend it.

Be advised, then, by one who most sincerely wishes both your present, and future welfare, to examine carefully the principles by which you have been misled, and not suffer the vehement and bawling vociferations, the emaciated and dejected countenances, the sad and mournful looks, the dismal and melancholy sighs and groans, the bombastic and affected sounds and gestures, the antic and hypocritical grimaces of your preachers, for which they are most of them so very remarkable, any longer to deceive you.

If you have been led into an error in building a Tabernacle (which some scruple not to say is erected on a rotten foundation)

tion) you may easily correct that mistake, as the *house* may be put to many other valuable uses, much more to your credit and advantage, than what you, in your great, and I hope well meant, but mistaken *zeal*, intended it for. And if you improve this hint, you'll shew your *faith* not to be an enthusiastic faith, but to be truly evangelical, built on the foundation which your Saviour, and his Apostles laid, both in their life, and doctrine, *by your good works*.

To conclude: I so far agree with you (if it be your meaning) that faith in our *Lord Jesus Christ, the Messias, the Son of God, the Saviour of the World*, is the only true justifying faith, or all the faith that is *justifying*: but this is not the only requisite; nor can the mere belief of any article of the Christian religion, simply of itself, justify any one in the sight of God. We must add to our *Faith in his Son*, a true and sincere repentance; that is, a thorough change of the heart from *Vice* to *Virtue*; and (as far as in us lies, a uniform, constant (not partial) obedience to all his *Laws*: otherwise, however we may *prune* ourselves on our supposed Orthodoxy, or the opinions of this, or that person, or sect of religion, we shall never (if there is any truth in the Bible) be either *justified, pardoned, or saved*.

F I N I S.

